

Doctor Says Sirhan, Hypnotized, Relived Crime in 'Blind Rage'

By DOUGLAS ROBINSON

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LOS ANGELES, March 24 — The fatal shooting of Senator Robert F. Kennedy was vividly recounted in court today as a psychiatrist who hypnotized Sirhan B. Sirhan in his jail cell told how the defendant had reenacted the killing.

Under hypnosis, the psychiatrist said, Sirhan jumped from his bed, pulled an imaginary gun from his belt and "fired convulsively over and over again while shouting, 'You son of a bitch!'"

The psychiatrist, Dr. Bernard L. Diamond of the University of California at Berkeley, the key defense witness, described the scene in the jail cell as a "startling experience . . . dramatic and real."

Dr. Diamond, asked by Emile Zola Berman, one of the defense attorneys, what Sirhan's

state of mind was at the exact time of the shooting, replied:

"In my opinion, on the basis of hypnotic experiences with Sirhan, the defendant at the precise moment of firing the gun was in a highly abnormal psychotic state of mind."

"He acted in a blind rage," the psychiatrist continued. The shooting, he said, was a "reflex action, an outgrowth not only of chronic psychosis but a very abnormal state that began when he became confused and vague by all the lights and mirrors" outside the pantry where the shooting occurred.

After re-enacting the shooting, Dr. Diamond testified, "Sirhan started to choke as he relived the attempts of those around the Senator to get the

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gun away from him."

"He actually turned blue a little and I was a little fearful he might be harmed," he told the jury. He said that the hypnotic re-creation was a "reasonably authentic version" of the shooting of the Senator at the Ambassador Hotel.

Dr. Diamond also testified that Sirhan had killed the Senator while in a "self-induced hypnotic state, a sort of twilight state" that he had succeeded in reproducing in the defendant's cell.

The psychiatrist's dramatic description came at the end of a long morning of testimony in which Dr. Diamond, speaking in the dry, detached manner of a professor lecturing a college class, calmly dissected Sirhan's personality. The defendant's mother, Mrs. Mary Sirhan, wept silently at times in her seat in the second row of spectators.

Defendant's Reaction

Throughout the testimony, Sirhan alternated between staring at the psychiatrist sometimes shaking his head in disbelief, and scrawling on a scratch-pad of legal-size yellow paper.

The psychiatrist described Sirhan's ability to hypnotize himself by staring fixedly in a mirror in his bedroom while two candles blazed on either side of his desk, a procedure he learned by studying occult literature.

Dr. Diamond began the 12th week of the 25-year-old Jordanian immigrant's trial by saying he had interviewed the defendant eight times in his jail cell. In addition to the 20 to 25 hours spent with Sirhan, he said, he had put in more than 100 hours interviewing members of the family, reading transcripts of interviews by other psychiatrists and studying technical books.

The psychiatrist, a thin-faced man with a tendency to ramble into the underbrush of psychiatric argot, said he had no trouble hypnotizing Sirhan. He emphasized several times that words and actions that came out under hypnosis were "not necessarily the truth."

'Merely an Instrument'

"A person can lie under hypnosis," he said. "Hypnosis is merely an instrument to gain access to the thoughts and feelings of a person who resists on a conscious level. Hypnosis does help overcome unconscious evasions or unconscious lies."

At one point, Mr. Berman asked the psychiatrist whether he could hypnotize Sirhan in court. Dr. Diamond said he thought he could.

"Would the court entertain such a demonstration?" Mr.

Berman asked Superior Court Judge Herbert V. Walker.

"Are you asking me?" the judge asked in a startled voice.

"I am," Mr. Berman replied. "The answer is no," the judge said.

Dr. Diamond testified that in his opinion Sirhan lacked the ability to "reasonably and maturely" premeditate the death of Senator Kennedy.

Although the defense has almost daily admitted that Sirhan killed Mr. Kennedy, it is relying on the California law of "diminished capacity" under which a jury must find a defendant guilty of a lesser crime than first-degree murder if the defense can prove that a defendant could not have given rational and mature consideration to his act.

'Architect' of Concept

Dr. Diamond is described as the "architect" of the concept of diminished capacity, since he has been the chief psychiatrist in all the cases from which the law developed. He holds professorships in criminology, law and clinical psychiatry.

In his testimony today, he began by tracing the harsh conditions that befell the Sirhan family during the tumultuous days of the Arab-Israeli war in 1948, recalling the bombings and other scenes witnessed by the 4-year-old Sirhan.

"There were times during the bombings," the psychiatrist said, "when young Sirhan would stand almost motionless, trembling with fear, his fists clenched at his sides in pro-

found shock—a condition that once lasted several days."

"It was at this time that he began going into trances and a twilight state," he continued. "Even then, it was clear he was heading for emotional difficulty."

The psychiatrist also described a violent scene with Sirhan's father when the family lived in Pasadena, Calif., in 1957 when the father tried to beat his son because he was interfering with a garden chore.

"For the first time," Dr. Diamond said, "Sirhan's older brother, Adel, prevented the father from beating the boy."

Shortly after that, the father returned to Jordan, taking the family savings. "The shock to Sirhan was profound," Dr. Diamond said.

As he grew older, the psychiatrist said, the boy became obsessed with the idea of assassination and began to write in his notebooks political manifestos and threats against political figures such as Senator Kennedy.



Associated Press

Dr. Bernard L. Diamond, left, psychiatrist, Mike McCowan, an investigator for the defense, at Los Angeles court.